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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, March 17, 2023, at 11 a.m.

Senate

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15, 2023

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mrs. MURRAY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Our Father, in whose patient hands the mighty seasons move with quiet beauty, we acknowledge today our great need for Your guidance. Lord, we are challenged by complexities that require more than human wisdom. We sometimes feel like children, grasping in the darkness, lost without light.

Bless this government of the people, for the people, and by the people. Guide its leaders to strive to possess that righteousness that exalts a nation. Enlighten our Senators with Your wisdom, lest the darkness of our times hide the paths of Your providence.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Brent Neiman, of Illinois, to be a Deputy Under Secretary of the Treasury.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WELCH). The majority leader is recognized.

RAIL SAFETY

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, this morning, I sent a letter to the National Transportation Safety Board Chair, Jennifer Homendy, urging her to expand NTSB's investigation of Norfolk Southern into a comprehensive review of all seven class I freight railroad companies' safety practices.

Though the NTSB is currently investigating the toxic derailment in East Palestine and Norfolk Southern's questionable safety culture, I want to make something very clear: Norfolk Southern isn't the only rail company that has spent years lobbying to loosen regulations, neglect safety upgrades, and lay off workers.

Norfolk Southern is just one example of a dangerous, industry-wide trend

within the rail industry that puts profits over people's safety.

In the last 5 years alone, there have been over 26,500 accidents and incidents in the rail industry, but instead of prioritizing safety, the industry cut over 30,000 employees from the workforce—roughly 20 percent.

We need the NTSB to expand its investigation because the current data can only tell part of the story. The data tells us how many accidents have occurred, but we want to know if they occurred in populated areas and how many gallons of oil were spilled or which toxic chemicals were released.

We also need to know which of these accidents occurred because the tracks were severely degraded or poorly designed.

We also want to know which negligent company policies contributed to the 2,700 deaths in recent years and if any of those could have been prevented.

These are just some of the questions that my letter asks—ones that can only be answered by a complete, comprehensive, and rigorous investigation of the rail freight industry.

I hope NTSB expands its investigation to include the safety practices and culture of all class I freight railroads. It is a necessary step to assure Americans that freight rail safety will improve.

In the meantime, I again commend my colleagues Senators BROWN and VANCE of Ohio and FETTERMAN and CASEY of Pennsylvania for introducing bipartisan legislation to improve rail

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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S781